

Module 12: Recovery - Looking To The Future

REACT online Toolkit info sheet

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Common Concerns For Relatives

Stigma and identity

Unfortunately there is still a stigma attached to mental health problems in our society. This can make it difficult for people with these kinds of problems and their relatives to talk openly about their experiences. 'What should I share with whom?' is a common concern.

Some people are happy to identify themselves as having (or have had) a mental health problem and can talk openly about these experiences. Others share with some carefully chosen close friends or employers, and others choose not to share. This is a very individual choice and depends a lot on the broader situation. It's a complex issue and one that you may also struggle with as a relative/close friend.

Recognising the complexity and opening up the opportunity to discuss it may be helpful.

Moving on from mental health services.

Recovery often involves reduced support from clinical services. This can be difficult as you may have come to depend on this support and feel anxious about it going. Ideally, reduced input from services occurs gradually and at the same time that links with other support networks are being built up. These might include other mental health services such as voluntary sector groups, or networks formed through hobbies, and friendship groups. The timing and pace of this transition is important.

It can be helpful to discuss with the clinical team in advance how and when this process will happen. If you are concerned about the timing of this, then it's important to raise your concerns with the team. It's also important to find out how you can get back in touch with the services in the future, if the need arises. So for example, can you contact them directly or is a new referral required?



Your Early Intervention team can make sure you get access to the REACT online toolkit



www.reactnhs.uk

Department of Health Disclaimer:

The views and opinions expressed therein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the HTA, NIHR, NHS or the Department of Health.

Funding Acknowledgement:

This project was funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assessment (HTA), 14/49/34.

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Your Own Recovery

Becoming a relative or close friend of someone with psychosis or bipolar disorder can be a very difficult and sometimes traumatic experience. It is not something you plan to do, and you won't always have the information and skills available to deal with it straight away.

The impact on your own work life, hobbies, and other relationships can be significant, and the emotional impact devastating. This is particularly true for those with a very close caring role.

It may be helpful to think about your own Recovery journey and what you need in order to rebuild a satisfying, hopeful and contributing life for yourself. Some of the things that other relatives have highlighted in being important in doing this are:

1. Making time to do other things and spend time with other people. This can get neglected when caring demands are high. If this does not feel possible, think about what might need to change to make it possible.
2. Getting support from other people. This might be extra support for your relative/friend so that this role is not being done by you alone, but also for yourself. Support may come from other friends, family, or services.
3. Despite the very many challenges that supporting someone with a mental health problem can present, some relatives report that positive things have come out of the situation and recognising this has been helpful. Examples have included:
 - Learning about something you didn't previously understand
 - Learning about yourself (or your relative) and your capacity to cope with difficult situations
 - Developing closer relationships with other people (possibly your relative/friend)
 - Developing greater empathy and understanding of people in distress
 - Being more empathic towards people in need

Visit the REACT NHS website group forum to find out what has worked for other relatives

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